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**THE SPANISH MOSAIC:
A CONFLICT MANAGEMENT MODEL FOR REGIONALISM**

BY

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USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

**THE SPANISH MOSAIC: A CONFLICT MANAGEMENT
MODEL FOR REGIONALISM?**

by

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ABSTRACT

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Spain is a nation of great regional diversity born of geographical differences and geophysical separation, and manifested in linguistic, cultural and historical variety.

Despite this diversity, the Spanish nation has endured as a united member of the international community. Is it likely that regional aspirations, especially those of Basques, Catalans and Galicians, will ultimately threaten Spanish unity?

Regional demands, although powerful, are not likely to endanger Spain's national survival. This is largely because of a central government strategy that recognizes the essential value of cultural, political and economic rights at the regional level.

Most visibly, and in contrast to previous ways of dealing with regional minorities, the importance of minority language rights is explicitly acknowledged. In Spain, as in other culturally diverse nations (e.g., Canada, Switzerland, Belgium), languages are the most visible and emotional symbol of a

people's collective aspirations. The central government has essentially defused this issue as a motive for separatism in Spain.

In addition, the increasing ethnic and linguistic homogeneity of even the most nationalistic regions has diluted separatist tendencies.

Economic and foreign policy issues, while important, are well managed and do not constitute likely causes of disintegration. Nevertheless, regional issues will continue to test the central government's political and strategic adroitness for the foreseeable future.

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PREFACE

I would like to express my thanks to my Project Advisor, Dr. Craig Nation, for his assistance and guidance in planning and researching this study of Spanish regionalism, and for his valuable suggestions and contributions to the final product. His expertise on regional issues throughout Europe helped me to understand the critical issues and to place the Spanish situation in its broader context.

In addition, I am especially grateful to Lieutenant Colonel Manuel Astilleros, my classmate and an officer of the Spanish Army, for being so kind as to review this paper. His insights, encouragement and constructive advice on this subject were immensely helpful to me in this effort.

THE SPANISH MOSAIC: A CONFLICT MANAGEMENT MODEL FOR REGIONALISM?

INTRODUCTION

A prevalent image of Spain is that of a nation with, ostensibly, one people, one language (Spanish), a common history and presumably a relatively unified world-view. Spain is, of course, actually a union of a number of different regions. Many of these regions are populated by culturally distinct peoples with their own languages, customs and attitudes toward their own region and the greater entity known as Spain. Even the language that the outside world knows as Spanish is actually Castilian, the language of the historically dominant central region.

Regional differences in a nation tend to be the rule, not the exception. Yet, in Spain these differences are so powerfully delineated in geography, culture and history that it seems almost miraculous that the Iberian Peninsula (with the lone exception of Portugal) could have been united at all. The cultural differences among the regions are great, starting with the various distinctive languages in active use throughout the country and continuing through various other cultural manifestations common to the various ethnic groups.

The roots of Spanish regionalism run deep. Particular geographic and historical factors led to the formation of

regional identities, and these identities are very strong in certain areas, such as Catalonia, the Basque Country and Galicia. Other areas such as Andalusia, while not harboring the separatist sentiments of the aforementioned three regions, have their own particular outlooks and issues over which they differ with the central government.

These regional variations are not unlike those in other European countries, in many respects. Some nations, such as Switzerland, seem to have managed their internal ethnic, cultural and linguistic differences in a less confrontational manner than the Spanish, at least outwardly. On the other hand, the former Yugoslavia provides an example of just how divisive such issues can be.

From the ancient Iberians and Celts, Phoenicians and Greeks, Carthaginians, Romans and Visigoths, through the Moorish invasion and the Reconquest, what some have referred to as a Spanish national character was formed. At the same time, regional identities throughout the peninsula were being forged. The nation was ultimately brought together around the Castilian center.

Regionalism was initially a barrier to national unity. Since the formation of the Spanish nation, it has exacerbated tensions between the individual regions and the central government at various critical junctures in Spanish history. It

has at times posed a threat to the concept of Spanish nationhood, as seen in the various separatist movements.

Regionalism has also been an aggravating factor in times of internal strife, i.e., the Carlist Wars of the 19th century, the Spanish Civil War and the events leading to it, and the Franco regime and its aftermath.

Yet Spain has survived and even prospered, while preserving (or maybe because of preserving) the regional diversity that enriches the national culture.

What has been the secret to Spanish success to date? Is the success permanent, or will regional differences again threaten the viability of the Spanish nation-state in the future?

A strategy of encouraging and providing a framework for regional autonomy has been pursued by the central government in the post-Franco years. It may be cited as the key to Spain's survival.

Changing demographics in the most distinctly defined historical regions, including evolving language patterns, have also affected regional and separatist tendencies.

The Spanish nation, as represented by the central government and its regional autonomy strategy, has endured. In spite of the threats to its unity over the course of the centuries, Spain is united and functioning as a vital and active

member of the United Nations, European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

Nevertheless, many difficult issues remain on the regional fronts, and it is not likely that anything but a continuing skillful effort to manage them will preserve Spanish unity over the long term.

ORIGINS OF SPANISH REGIONALISM

GEOGRAPHIC INFLUENCE

In Spain, regionalism begins with geography. The first factor to be considered is the isolation of the Iberian Peninsula, behind the mighty wall of the Pyrenees Mountains, bordered on its remaining sides by seas, and separated from Africa by the Straits of Gibraltar. The common Iberian character, to the extent that it exists, was forged in a setting of regional isolation from the very start. This insularity probably contributed to the hallowed Spanish individualism, a sense of independence that has at times bordered on anarchy.

Internally, Spain is a land of mountain ranges that bisect the countryside, rendering various regions virtually inaccessible for a large part of Spanish history. Spain's average altitude of 2,000 feet is second in Europe only to that of Switzerland (3,600 feet).¹

Spain is also full of stark geographical contrasts. The gently sloping, green hills of temperate Galicia are a world apart from the stark, rocky Castilian "meseta", the central plateau which, according to the old Castilian proverb, enjoys "nueve meses de invierno y tres meses de infierno" (nine months of winter and three months of hell). The mountainous refuge of the Basques and the proximity of the Catalan center of

population to France and Italy strongly influenced the development of these regions. Andalusia's subtropical climate and proximity to Africa were critical factors in its history.

EARLY TRENDS

The first clear regional differentiation in Spain began to appear around the year 1000 BC. The southern valleys of the Guadiana and Guadalquivir Rivers felt the influence of the Phoenicians, traders and colonizers who established cities along the southern coast, including Gadir (now Cadiz) and Malaka (Malaga). The Phoenicians were followed by their ethnic cousins, the Carthaginians and the Greeks, also along the southern and Mediterranean coasts.²

Also in about 1000 BC, the central meseta began to take on distinct regional characteristics, as the influx of people from the north continued.³

Andalusia and the Mediterranean coast became home to a people known as Iberians. Their contact with colonizing powers such as Greece influenced their development of a distinctive culture based on agriculture, livestock raising and commerce. They were also warlike in nature, often selling their services as mercenaries to other peoples such as the Greeks.⁴

Other early contributors to regional development included the Celts, who began to settle the northern parts of Spain around 800 BC. They constructed fortified settlements called

"castros", and their social structure was based on warlike tribes that gradually turned to agriculture as a means of existence. The confluence of the Iberian and Celtic cultures, along the Duero River, became the birthplace of a hybrid people, the Celtiberians.⁵

The first period of Iberian Peninsula unity was under the Roman Empire. After the Roman defeat of Carthage, around 200 BC, it took the Romans nearly two centuries to stamp out the resistance of local peoples such as the Celtiberians and the Lusitanians (who inhabited much of what is now Portugal and the Spanish province of Leon). The Romans left a lasting legacy in the peninsula, starting with the various Latin-based languages and a political, social, economic and cultural base.⁶

The Romans were eventually displaced by Germanic tribes who overran the peninsula, starting in the fifth century AD. After a period of anarchy, the country evolved into a kingdom ruled by the Visigoths, the predominant invading tribe. The primary Visigothic contribution to Spain was its conversion to Christianity, starting with the Arian version, then moving to Catholicism later in the 6th century. The Visigoths fell to the invading Muslims from North Africa, the Moors, in 711 AD⁷.

The Moors quickly conquered the entire peninsula, except for a few mountainous areas in the north (now parts of Galicia, Asturias and the Basque Country). They were to remain until

1492, when the last of their numbers were expelled from the Kingdom of Granada by Ferdinand and Isabel. They left a deep imprint on Spanish culture, particularly in the southern region of Andalusia, where their reign endured longest. Direct influences on the languages, literatures, philosophy and character of the Spanish nation are felt to this day. Indirectly, the Moors helped forge the character of the various regions, and even more importantly, they gave a common cause to what would ultimately become the Spanish nation. It can probably be said that much of what constitutes a Spanish national spirit stems from the Reconquista, the retaking of the lands from the Moorish conquerors.

Throughout the Reconquista, however, the belligerents on the Spanish side consisted of various small, regional kingdoms. Even El Cid, the principal Spanish national hero, served the cause of Christendom under various feudal entities in a pre-national era.

The first Spanish regional kingdoms were formed in the early days of the Reconquista in the northern mountains. The Kingdom of Asturias was the first, in the early 8th century, followed by the Kingdoms of Leon and Castille (from the Spanish word for "castle", this would become the central, unifying heartland of Spain).

Also taking shape during the Reconquista were the Kingdoms of Aragon and Navarre (encompassing what is now the Basque country), and the Counties of Catalonia.⁸

It was not until the fifteenth century, with the marriage of Ferdinand of Aragon (which included, by that time, Catalonia, Valencia and Mallorca) and Isabel of Castille (which included Leon, Galicia, Estremadura and most of Andalusia) that the nucleus of a Spanish state was formed. The Catholic Monarchs, as they came to be called, united their kingdoms, then expelled the remaining Moors from Granada in 1492. The last addition to what is now Spain came with the annexation of Navarre by Ferdinand in 1512, after the death of Isabel.⁹ With this series of consolidations, a loose union of largely self-governing kingdoms that would compose the future Spanish nation was complete.

Even after many years of its existence, however, defining the essence of Spanish nationhood would never prove an easy task. The most concerted effort to do so in modern times was probably that of the group of 19th century writers known as the Generation of '98. Reacting to what they viewed as interminable years of stagnation and fruitless conflict during which Spain had been dominated by regressive forces of monarchy, clericalism, narrow self-interest, close-mindedness and isolation from the progressive currents sweeping other nations,

they tried to formulate their own visions of Spain and its destiny. While not monolithic in their approaches, they all sought to distill the positive attributes of the Spanish national character, as a basis for the development of a modern Spanish society.

The principle members of the Generation of '98 were philosophers as well as writers: Baroja, Unamuno, Valle-Inclan, Azorin, Jimenez, Machado, Benavente, Ortega y Gasset. Their subject was almost always Spain. Some, like Miguel de Unamuno, would base their calls for a new Spain on the foundations of the old. He never renounced his Catholic religion and said he wanted to "rescue the sepulcher of Don Quixote from the mandarins of reason."¹⁰ Such a romantic notion seems to be a call to idealism, to challenge the old order without discarding it entirely. Unamuno believed that the old pillars of Spanish society could be renovated and used to shore up a new and more united Spain.

Pio Baroja, on the other hand, tended to favor a more thorough housecleaning of the Spanish national psyche: "No cops, no priests, no flies!" cries one of his characters, and he echoed the sentiment in his philosophical writings.¹¹ But what they all agreed upon was the idea that Spanish nationhood needed to be better defined, goals needed to be set, so there could be a better Spain in the future. Yet there was to be continuing

and often violent strife in the future of this nation, culminating in the Civil War of 1936-1939.

Regional factors were not a major cause of this great and bitter conflict. The ideological fault lines that split Spain cut through regional and family boundaries, as Spain became a microcosm of the struggle, between forces loosely categorized as right-wing nationalists and left-wing socialists, that would soon involve much of the world. The powers of old Spain, including the aristocracy, the propertied class, the Catholic Church and the military, were arrayed against the left-wing political parties (communists, socialists), the workers and the labor unions, and the intellectual classes.

Regional tensions would, however, play a role in drawing up the opposing sides, as the Basques, although devoutly Catholic and conservative, joined the Republican forces, knowing they would have no chance for autonomy with a Nationalist victory. Catalonia made a similar decision; not as fervently Catholic (indeed, a strong anarchic element flourished in Catalonia), it viewed the Republic as the guarantor of its autonomy. By contrast, the conservative region of Leon, long closely affiliated with Castile, having few distinguishing regional characteristics (the Leonese language had essentially gone into disuse in the Middle Ages), and not being a hotbed of socialism, remained in the Nationalist camp from the start.

A precursor to the Civil War might be seen in the events of 1909 in Barcelona. After the Spanish army suffered a setback in Morocco, the government called up the Catalan reserves. This move, regarded in Catalonia as a reprisal for that region's separatist tendencies, sparked a general strike and several days of riots. Churches and convents were attacked during what was called the "semana tragica," and martial law was declared in all of Spain.¹²

Catalan and Basque separatists paid a price for their support of the Republic. On April 5, 1938, the Catalonia Statute Law was abolished; the three Basque provinces had lost their autonomy earlier, upon falling to the Nationalist forces.¹³

EXTERNAL INFLUENCES

At no time during its history has Spain existed in a vacuum, of course. External influences have greatly affected the development of political and cultural entities on the Iberian Peninsula. Portugal was able to maintain its independence, and perhaps reinforce the linguistic and cultural aspirations of Galicia, with the help of an important ally, Great Britain. This alliance was cemented in 1386 by the Treaty of Windsor.

French influence has always been strong in the Basque Country. The Basque people actually straddle the border of

France and Spain, and the Carlist Wars in that region were at least partially instigated by the Napoleonic invasion.

French influence in Catalonia also was, and still is, strongly felt. France actually controlled portions of present-day Catalonia from 1640-1659, 1694-1697 and 1808-1813.

Finally, the cultural influence of the North African peoples, in particular the Berbers, has long been significant in Andalusia and the Canary Islands.

These external factors remain sources of significant influence in Spain today.¹⁴ Others, deriving from Spain's integration in Europe since the end of the Franco era, are also strongly felt today. These include Spanish participation in the European Union, NATO and other international organizations.

CONCLUSION

In essence, Spain's geography and history created a patchwork of distinct local cultures throughout the Iberian Peninsula. One of these, Portugal, succeeded in maintaining its independence from the center, represented by Madrid, over the long run. Others, such as Leon or Andalusia, were essentially subsumed, culturally and linguistically, under that center. Yet there were a few, further geographically and in many ways historically (Basques, Catalans, Galicians) from the center, who neither attained independence nor reconciled themselves entirely

with union with Madrid. These three continue to present the major challenges of regionalism in today's Spain.

MAJOR REGIONAL DIVISIONS

The regions that were brought together to form modern Spain, as historically delineated, included Andalusia, Aragon, Asturias, the Balearic Islands, the Basque Country, Castille (New and Old), Catalonia, Estremadura, Galicia, Leon, Murcia, Navarre, and Valencia. These are cited for historical purposes, and do not in all cases correspond directly to the current political entities, known as autonomous regions, which will be examined later in further detail. The majority of these regions do not have aspirations that approach the level of nationalism, i.e., they have not had significant separatist movements and they lack distinguishing national characteristics such as a separate language. This does not necessarily imply a lack of regional identity and regional issues of contemporary importance in these areas. Andalusia, for example, has a unique heritage, having received the strongest Moorish influence of the Spanish regions, owing to its proximity to Africa and the length of the Moorish occupation. As previously noted, the three regions with the most powerful regional tendencies, both historically and at present, are the Basque Country, Catalonia and Galicia.

The Basque Country

While no one is certain of the origins of the enigmatic people of the Basque Country, there is no doubt that they have

inhabited their mountainous redoubt in the north of Spain (and a smaller area of southern France) for many centuries. Their language is the primary indicator of their local longevity. As a non-Indo-European language, it probably predates the introduction of the latter into the European continent, 3,000 years ago; scholars believe the Basques arrived before that time.¹⁵

Although there is no indication that the Basques ever enjoyed self-government or independence as a political unit, they did retain a good deal of local power after being integrated into the Spanish state in 1512 (along with the Kingdom of Navarre, to which they belonged at that time). This semi-autonomy was institutionalized in traditional laws known as fueros, giving the Basques the right to maintain a system of local administration.¹⁶

Aside from being of interest to anthropologists, the Basque language is the major and most visible symbol of their identity as a separate people. This, in spite of the fact that it has very little in the way of a written tradition, and is so fragmented among dialects that the Basque-speaking inhabitants of one mountain valley cannot understand their neighbors in nearby valleys (it is estimated that there are upwards of twenty mutually-unintelligible Basque dialects). At any rate, when the Basque Country was forced to pay the price for its allegiance to

the Republic during the Civil War, one of the costs was a severe repression of its language by the Franco regime. This suppression was apparently be more severe than anything of the sort in Catalonia or Galicia, causing the language to virtually disappear from the public domain.¹⁷ A language renaissance in the late 1950s, including a standardization of the Basque language based on common elements from the various dialects, kept the flame alive.¹⁸

Into this climate was born the campaign of political violence waged by the separatist group known as ETA (Euskadi Ta Askatasuna, meaning Euskadi and Freedom - Euskadi being the Basque name for the Basque homeland). ETA first appeared in the 1960s, and has carried out bombings, assassinations and other acts of terrorism ever since. In recent years ETA has become increasingly fragmented into numerous factions, and violence has played a shrinking, though ever present, role in its strategy, as new political choices have become available.¹⁹

Another distinguishing characteristic of the Basque Country is its surprising (in view of its size) economic strength. It produces more than half of Spain's steel, two-thirds of its machine tools, and contains one-third of the country's shipyards,²⁰ as well as a strong tourist industry. This may be a result of the region's natural mineral resources, its seaports

opening on northern Europe, its temperate climate and the industrious nature of the Basque people.

The Basque Country does not represent a statistically large portion of Spain in any sense; it contains only 5.6% of the overall population, 1.5% of the land area, and generates 8.2% of the income.²¹ However, with its propensity for political violence and key economic role, the Basque Country will not be ignored by the central government. Driven by a strong cultural identity highlighted by its distinctive language, Basque regionalism will not disappear.

However, its nationalist tendencies will likely be somewhat muted, over time, as immigration takes its toll on the cultural unity of the Basque Country. Of the Basque Country's approximately 2.5 million inhabitants,²² less than 25% are estimated to be ethnic Basques,²³ and only about 580,000 speak the language in one form or other.²⁴ This is so in part because the non-Indo-European Basque language is not one that is easily acquired by the Castilian-speaking immigrant (unlike Catalan and Galician). This situation is reflected in the fact that Basque has made only limited inroads into the information media, even in the Basque Country. There is only one entirely Basque newspaper, Egunkaria, established in 1990. Several other papers publish small portions in Basque (Egin, with 17%, has the most Basque content of these). There is one 24-hour all-Basque radio

station serving the Basque Autonomous Community and a number of smaller, limited range stations (over 120). One television station, Euskal Telebista 1, has broadcast entirely in Basque since 1982, and is received throughout the Basque Country.²⁵

While of obvious significance, these Basque-language resources are dwarfed by the sources available in the Basque Country in Castilian.

Catalonia

While not prone to the sometimes violent expressions of separatism often associated with the Basque Country, Catalonia is another area of Spain that combines a strong regional identity with a relatively powerful economic position. Its capital, Barcelona, has long been considered the most "European" of Spanish cities (probably because of its proximity to France and Italy, and the resultant historic cross-fertilization this proximity allowed). Catalonia's geographic situation, on the Mediterranean seacoast adjacent to France, is both economically and culturally advantageous.

Catalan regional aspirations were first documented in the twelfth to the fourteenth centuries, when Catalonia was loosely federated with the Kingdom of Aragon. The instrument of Catalan self-rule was a parliament called a "Corts", and it designated a committee, the "Generalitat", that not only collected taxes, but determined how to spend them.²⁶

The Catalan language, a Romance language that dates back, in written form, to the ninth century, is the principal unifying element in the Catalan cultural identity.²⁷ The Catalans as a people were not as isolated as the mountain-dwelling Basques or Galicians, and without their distinctive native tongue, they would have little claim to ethnic differentiation. They are, however, fiercely loyal to their linguistic heritage, taking great pride in its history. It is no surprise, then, that efforts to repress Catalan identity in the aftermath of their participation in the Civil War on the Republican side centered on their language; its public and written use was prohibited.²⁸ Catalan books were searched out and burned, place names were Castilianized, and even when, in the 1940s, permission was granted for the publication of books and presentation of plays in the language, it remained banned from radio, television, press and schools.²⁹

The Catalan language has benefited in recent years from its relative similarity to Castilian (85% lexical similarity,³⁰ as opposed to Basque, for example, which has virtually none). In Catalonia, only 50% of the population speak Catalan as a mother tongue, but another 30%, at least, can understand it.³¹ This points to a tendency of immigrants to be able to learn enough of the language to at least function in it, making it less likely that Catalan will ever wither away. A strong language law

passed in 1998, to be reviewed further in the section on the current status of regional affairs, will probably strengthen the Catalan base even more.

While the economy of the region has fluctuated, unemployment has consistently been below average for Spain, and the immigration balance between 1951 and 1981 was positive by about 1.5 million.³² Roughly half of the population of Catalonia is of immigrant stock,³³ making language, not ethnicity, perhaps a more important factor in determining personal regional identity.

The absence of militant separatism should not obscure the fact that Catalonia maintains a strong and distinctive regional identity.

Galicia

The remote, mountainous northwestern corner of Spain called Galicia is known for its mild, rainy climate and the soft, melancholy temperament of its people. Celtic influence is at its strongest in Spain, and the local version of the bagpipes are popular.³⁴

The northern part of Galicia was never completely subjugated by the Moors, and the Reconquista carried the Galician language to Portugal, where, in slightly different form, it became the language of a worldwide empire. Yet, Galicia itself has little history of independence. Galician

historians point to a "Kingdom of Galicia" during the time of the Visigoths as the first manifestation of a distinct Galician regional entity (approximately 600-700 AD).³⁵

One factor that contributed to maintaining Galicia's separate identity was the region's geographic isolation and distance from Madrid. Another was the lack of economic integration with the center, and the resulting poverty. Galicia is a land of small, poorly-producing farms, where, historically, famines have contributed to emigration to other parts of Spain and to North and South America. It has been estimated that, over the past 500 years, one in three Galician men has been compelled, by economic necessity, to emigrate³⁶ (as is the case with many historically impoverished European regions).

As in the Basque Country and Catalonia, language is a principal mainstay of the Galician identity. Closer to Portuguese than to Castilian, Galician was, for centuries, the language of the poor and the peasant. Galician nationalists look with something akin to envy upon the Portuguese language, which they consider the offspring of their native tongue. It has spread to Brazil, Africa and Asia, becoming a major world language due to Portuguese independence and empire building. Currently, an effort is underway to make Galician the language of the educated classes, as well. At any rate, it holds an immense symbolic value for the people of the region.

More so than in the case of the Basque language, and possibly even Catalan, Galician remains deeply imbedded in the culture of the inhabitants of its native region. A majority of the 60% of the inhabitants of Galicia who are ethnic Galicians speak the language, at least at home, and about 80% of the total population can understand it.³⁷ (Galician, while closer to Portuguese, has a strong lexical similarity to Castilian). The national Law for Linguistic Standardization and local Galician language regulations, to be discussed in the section on the current status of regional affairs, have contributed to fortifying the language's place in Galicia.³⁸

Modern-day Galician nationalism, such as it is, stems from the literary revival of the Galician language of the latter part of the 19th century. It was led by the poet and national hero Rosalia de Castro; her Cantares Gallegos is considered one of the great works of Spanish literature. Such works, along with Alfredo de Branas' El Regionalismo in 1889, contributed to a nationalist movement and the negotiation of an autonomy statute that won more than 99 percent of the vote in June, 1936. The Civil War shortly put an end to the statute, if not the aspirations.³⁹

OTHER REGIONS

While the above three regions are recognized, even by the Spanish Constitution, as having historically and culturally

defined precedents as distinct regions, other areas of the country had certain local aspirations as well. One of these was Andalusia.

Although lacking its own language, Andalusia was defined by its Moorish heritage, as previously noted, and by its economic situation. A poor region dominated by the "latifundio", or large absentee-owned agricultural estate, it would raise its own issues when the time came to establish autonomous regions.

The same would be true for other areas, from Aragon, Asturias and Cantabria, to Valencia, the Balearic Islands and even Madrid. It seemed to at least one distinguished observer that many of these "regions" simply were not about to be left behind their more historically and culturally established neighbors.⁴⁰

The regional issues or problems in these communities, however, would never be as acute and potentially divisive as those in the three historic regions. This fact can be attributed to history, and the resultant development of a strong regional identity, characterized primarily by an enduring native language, in the Basque Country, Catalonia and Galicia.

CENTRAL GOVERNMENT REGIONAL STRATEGY

In the aftermath of the Franco years, it was evident to Spain's leadership that only a drastic departure from the repressive policies of the past could prevent a return to the horrible destructiveness last witnessed during the relatively recent Civil War. It was also clear that a coherent strategy would have to be implemented to achieve the goal of maintaining Spanish national unity in the absence of previously employed coercion.

One change was that from dictatorship to parliamentary democracy. The second, and probably no less important from the standpoint of the well-being of the Spanish nation, was from a unitary state to a union of 17 "Autonomous Communities."⁴¹

Spain is not, of course, the first European nation to comprise a number of partially autonomous, culturally varied entities; nor is it unusual for a European nation to confront serious language divisions. Switzerland is an example of a nation that has done both. Its system of government as outlined in the Swiss constitution of 1874 confers limited sovereignty upon the cantons (Article 3, "The cantons are sovereign, in so far as their sovereignty is not limited by the federal constitution, and exercise all those rights, which have not been transferred to federal power").⁴² The division of the Swiss

nation into cantons reflects both historical processes and cultural fault lines. The twenty cantons and six half-cantons are proportionately fairly representative of the 75% of Swiss German speakers, 20% French speakers, 4% Italian speakers and 1% who speak other tongues, notably Romansch (in the canton of Graubunden).

Italy is also a nation with strong regional influences. Its national language, Italian, is based on the Tuscan dialect, but incorporates elements of other regional dialects.⁴³ As recently as 1972, Italy enacted an autonomy statute designed to ensure the language rights of each linguistic group in the province of Bolzano-Bolzen, known to its German-speaking majority population as the South Tirol. While protecting the rights of the Italian and Ladin-speaking citizens, the statute provides for the use of German in the civil service and schools, and reserves government posts for German-speakers.⁴⁴ Belgium has also codified the rights of its French-speaking Walloons (roughly a third of its population) and majority Dutch-speaking Flemings. Great Britain has wrestled for years with Gaelic-speaking (or otherwise independence-minded) Scots, Welsh and Irish citizens.

The basis for Spain's regional autonomy was established in its Constitution of 1978. An accelerated path to autonomy was articulated in Article 151 for regions having voted for autonomy

during the Second Republic, i.e., the three historic regions of the Basque Country, Catalonia and Galicia. Article 143 delineated a slower process for other parts of the nation. The purpose of the autonomy strategy was, clearly, to prevent the balkanization of Spain.⁴⁵

Four principles of autonomy were enunciated in the constitution:

1. Regional autonomy must not undermine the unity of Spain;
2. The process must not interfere with the central government's ability to maintain internal and external stability;
3. The process should enhance regional solidarity through a redistribution of wealth to the poorest regions;
4. The central government should ensure that regional governments have sufficient resources to finance the activities that have been transferred to them.⁴⁶

Under the constitution, certain areas were listed as being under the exclusive jurisdiction of the national government: international affairs; defense; justice; criminal; commercial and labor legislation; merchant shipping; civil aviation; foreign trade and tariffs; economic planning; finances; and public safety. More ambiguously, it declared that autonomous communities may assume authority for: the organizations of their self-government; municipal boundaries; town planning; housing; public works; forestry; environmental protection; cultural affairs and organizations; tourism; sports and leisure events; social welfare; health and hygiene; and non-

commercial ports and airports. The constitution also permitted the national government to delegate authorities reserved to its jurisdiction to the regions.⁴⁷

The constitution explicitly recognized the critical importance of language issues. It introduced the possibility of "co-official" status (with Castilian, of course) for local languages. By 1988, Catalan, Galician, Basque, Valencian and Mallorcan had achieved this status in their respective regions (the latter two are linguistically similar to Catalan).⁴⁸

It did not take long for the regions to avail themselves of the autonomy clause, starting with the historic three. Dates of approval of statutes of autonomy for the seventeen autonomous communities, in chronological order, were:

Basque Country	December 18, 1979
Catalonia	December 18, 1979
Galicia	April 6, 1981
Andalusia	December 30, 1981
Asturias	December 30, 1981
Cantabria	December 30, 1981
La Rioja	June 9, 1982
Murcia	June 9, 1982
Valencia	July 1, 1982
Aragon	August 10, 1982
Castilla-La Mancha	August 10, 1982
Canary Islands	August 10, 1982
Navarre	August 10, 1982
Balearic Islands	February 25, 1983
Castilla y Leon	February 25, 1983
Extremadura	February 25, 1983
Madrid	February 25, 1983 ⁴⁹

The fervor for autonomy seems to correlate, to a large degree, to the dates of approval for the autonomy statutes for the regions. Thus, we see the three historic regions at the top of the list, which ends with the capital region, Madrid (perhaps a region in the sense of constituting the center of political and economic power of the nation).

The draft autonomy statutes were required by the constitution to be approved by referendum in the proposed autonomous communities. The first statutes were approved in elections held in Catalonia and the Basque Country on October 25, 1979. 59.5% of Catalan voters took part, with 89.9% voting yes. 57% of eligible Basque voters rendered a 94.6% favorable decision.⁵⁰ The voters in these regions were those who strongly favored autonomy. In December 1980, only 30% of Galician voters turned out for their autonomy referendum, and nearly 20% voted no.⁵¹ Not exactly an overwhelming endorsement, but decisive, and the autonomy bandwagon was rolling.

After the granting of autonomy to Andalusia, any thoughts of restricting autonomy to certain historically delimited regions were swept away. The remaining areas of the country sought and were granted autonomous status.⁵²

It is interesting to note that actual separatist sentiment was not strong in any of the regions. In the Basque Country, where separatism has traditionally been more prevalent than

anywhere else in Spain, only 24% of respondents expressed a desire for independence in 1977; that number dropped to 17% in 1982, with autonomy in force.⁵³ While the number would later fluctuate, it would never approach a majority. In Catalonia, the major political parties abandoned the principle of national self-determination, or separatism, in 1978.⁵⁴ If the goal was to keep Spain intact, the regional strategy of the national government was working.

While the autonomy strategy was obviously popular among the populace of the various regions, it had its opponents in the central government's power structure, and would have to weather a severe storm before its status as the long-term policy for Spain was assured.

In February 1981, an overthrow of the government was attempted by a coalition of right-wing elements who apparently believed the unfettering of regional aspirations would destroy Spain. This belief was probably nourished by the government's inability to eliminate regionally-motivated political violence, particularly that of Basque separatists. With the strong support of King Juan Carlos for the government and its reform measures, the coup was averted. The regional strategy was safe, in principle.

However, modifications were to be made. Terrorist violence had been on the increase, growing from fewer than 20 deaths

inflicted per year in the period from 1968 through 1977 to about 70 deaths per year from 1978 through 1980.⁵⁵ In order to dispel the notion prevalent in right wing circles that regional autonomy was the beginning of the end of the Spanish nation, the two major national political parties (the center-right Union of the Democratic Center, UCD, and the socialist Spanish Socialist Workers Party, PSOE) met in April 1981 to come to an agreement on the further progress of autonomy. A summit of Spain's regional leaders was then held (Basque and Catalan leaders were not invited), leading to an autonomy pact designed to curtail further devolution of powers to the regions. The Organic Law on the Harmonization of the Autonomy Process, a further attempt to limit the boundaries of further regional autonomy, was drafted. This led to massive demonstrations against its implementation in the Basque Country and Catalonia, in late 1981 and 1982. At the behest of minority deputies, the draft law was declared unconstitutional by the Spanish Constitutional Tribunal in August 1983.⁵⁶ The crisis was abated. The debate, and the balancing act between the national government and the regions, have continued to this day. Regional autonomy had been established; it could not be arbitrarily limited by the national government. It would have to be carefully managed by all parties concerned.

CURRENT STATE OF REGIONAL AFFAIRS

One area which has not proven to be as problematic as might be expected in the regional/national government context is economics. This is not to say that serious economic problems do not exist in Spain; only that they are not structured in such a way as to significantly exacerbate regional problems.

Of the regions with the strongest non-Castilian identities, the Basque Country and Catalonia fall among the wealthier regions of Spain in percentage of national per capita income - not quite as well-off as Madrid or Navarre, but ahead of all the others. Galicia, on the other hand, is just ahead of last-place Andalusia.⁵⁷ Given the weakness of actual separatist sentiment in all three of these regions, as discussed previously, it may be deduced that none of them feel that they would be more prosperous outside of the Spanish national framework. This is in contrast to the situation in, for example, Yugoslavia, where the most prosperous regions provided the impetus for secession.

Economic issues do arise in the regional context. For example, Andalusian leaders were vociferous in denouncing the Spanish Minister of Agriculture's agreement with the European Community on olive oil subsidies and production limits in June 1998. The national government viewed the agreement as a triumph; Andalusia saw Spain placed at a disadvantage vis-à-vis

Italy, France, Portugal and Greece.⁵⁸ The result? Some acrimonious recriminations over the negotiations with the European Union, but certainly nothing likely to tear Spain asunder.

Entry into the European Community has had some other negative repercussions for regional industries. The Galician fishing fleet had to be restricted to conform to EU policies, and European imports have hurt the Catalan dairy industry.⁵⁹

This leads into another area of potential conflict: dealings with foreign countries and international organizations. Foreign policy is an area reserved to the national government, as previously noted. It has not been a source of great conflict between the latter and the autonomous communities, although there have been disagreements. The regions have pushed for delegation of certain authorities by the national government, as permitted by the constitution.

For example, in August 1998 the national government rejected an appeal to permit autonomous communities to send representatives to meetings of the Council of Ministers of the European Union, when the questions to be discussed were matters under the "exclusive competence" of the regional governments.

The official reason given by the national government for the refusal was that the concept of "exclusive competence" of the regions does not appear in the constitution, and that the

assumption of such a concept would create an impenetrable barrier to all state (i.e., national) intervention in such matters.⁶⁰ Obviously, the national government wishes to hold the line in certain cases in order to avoid becoming irrelevant. This is not to say that, in the end, the autonomous communities may not achieve some limited degree of international maneuvering room, as the states of the United States have in promoting commerce to their own benefit.

In major foreign policy decisions, regional issues have not been divisive or disruptive. Spain's incorporation into the European Union did not stir regional opposition. Nor did the referendum to approve the entry of Spain into NATO, approved by a 52.49% to 39.84% margin in March 1986.⁶¹

In the area of social welfare, the national government has resisted attempts by the Basque and Catalan governments to take control of the country's social security and social insurance programs in their regions.⁶²

The greatest and most visible regional problem has continued to be Basque separatist violence. Of particular notice were the murders of two local ruling Popular Party council members by Basque terrorists of the group ETA in the Basque Country city of Renteria, in December 1997 and June 1998. Murders such as these have provoked public revulsion, and have little popular support, even in the Basque Country. ETA's

political wing, HB (Herri Batasuna), won less than 1% of the vote in the 1993 general elections; it has lost 33% of its electoral support since 1987. However, it manages to recruit enough new members to continue to be disruptive; a survey indicates that 17.5% of young Basques believe violence is "justified in certain cases."⁶³ Despite their lack of popular support and their inability to achieve their separatist goals, Basque terrorists will continue to represent an inflammatory and potentially volatile regional influence.

Finally, the most prominent manifestation of regionalism, language, is of increasing significance in Catalonia. A 1998 "New Law of Catalan" reinforces the status of this minority language with regard to its competitor, Castilian. The law makes Catalan the required language of education at all levels. It requires that certain percentages of television and radio broadcasting by locally authorized stations be attained (e.g., 50% of all radio transmissions). Government institutions are required to conduct their business "normally" in Catalan.⁶⁴

Given the linguistic proximity of Castilian and Catalan, and the high percentage of residents of the region who are able to function in the language, it is likely that the law will succeed in its intent of bolstering Catalan as a language of public discourse.

A series of regulations in Galicia, based on the national Law for Linguistic Standardization of June 15, 1983, are designed to promote the use of Galician in similar fashion. Castilian is still predominant, however, and the rules do not require that Galician be used in education or other public functions.⁶⁵ It is doubtful that the Galician language, so similar to Castilian, will ever represent a serious threat to the latter tongue's dominance in everyday Galician affairs. It does provide a cultural counterpoint to national dominance; however, it is not likely to be a source of conflict with the national government.

Ironically, in the region that boasts the greatest distinction from the dominant Castilian culture, the Basque language is least likely to be passed on to future generations or immigrants in large measure. It is simply very difficult for the Castilian speaker to become fluent in Basque. It will remain a cultural icon of great symbolic significance, but will never come close to being the language of public and official discourse in the Basque Country.

CONCLUSION

Where does Spain stand, now, with regard to regionalism?

There are those who feel it has gone too far. Miguel Herrero y Rodriguez de Minon, a deputy of the UDC (Union de Centro Democratico) party, helped draft the constitutional sections on regional autonomy. He says the system was designed to settle the divisive Basque, Catalan and Galician questions, but there is a problem now in the generalization of the autonomy system to the entire country. "In making equal what is not equal lies a large part of our autonomy problem", Herrero de Minon stated.⁶⁶ Yet, what would be the alternative? Would Spanish government work more smoothly without the autonomy statutes? Or would certain regions have explored more seriously the prospect of separation? The latter seems more likely.

Another drafter of the constitutional autonomy clauses, lawyer and diplomat Jose Pedro Perez Llorca, opposes any possibility of amending the autonomy clauses. "We should not run the risk of a new constitution, because the present one maintains a political value of consensus in a country that has had very few", he stated.⁶⁷ It is hard to argue with Mr. Perez Llorca; if the system is, relatively speaking, not broken, why fix it?

One need only listen to present-day nationalist leaders to realize how difficult things could become, if they were to hold sway in a reopened debate over an attempt by the national government to retreat on its autonomy policy. Said the Galician nationalist leader Xose Manuel Beiras, "only through the windows of the nationalities can oxygen penetrate the dark corners of the ever more corrupt Spanish state." Or, as Xabier Arzalluz, leader of the Basque National Party said, "I fear Spain more than I do ETA."⁶⁸ These sentiments were probably far more widespread before 1978 and autonomy, than since.

In short, there is no real sentiment for separatism in the three historic regions of the Basque Country, Catalonia and Galicia, nor elsewhere in Spain. There are no critical ethnic, economic, legal or foreign policy issues that threaten Spanish unity. The highly volatile issue of language has been defused by the policy adopted by the national government.

On the other hand, there is strong sentiment favoring local autonomy and the strengthening of regional identities. This identity issue is reflected most vividly in the support for the minority languages of the Basque Country, Catalonia and Galicia. The language issue typifies the balancing act that must often be performed in order to maintain the equilibrium of autonomy versus national government control. Attempts to repress local languages have been counterproductive in Spain in the past,

actually inflaming separatist tendencies. Yet liberal language rights encourage separate identities.

This is not necessarily a problem. A look back in Spanish history would indicate that regional pride does not necessarily exclude national pride. During the French occupation of Spain in 1808, Spaniards from all regions - Galicians, Basques, Catalans, Castilians, Andalusians - vigorously fought the Napoleonic invaders⁶⁹ in what became the prototypical "guerrilla" war, the "little war" of the people against the outsider.

There is no reason why a skillfully governed Spain cannot remain a united nation, even while nurturing and encouraging its regional cultures and institutions. The national government strategy must be continued, fine-tuned perhaps, but not abandoned. Spain will not disintegrate; its societal fabric should actually be strengthened by the richness of its diversity.

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ENDNOTES

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³ Ibid., 11.

⁴ Ibid., 13.

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⁶ Ibid., 14-18.

⁷ Madariaga, 14-15.

⁸ Roldan, 34-35.

⁹ Ibid., 45-55.

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¹³ Madariaga, 557.

¹⁴ Lieutenant Colonel Manuel Astilleros, Spanish Army, discussions with author, January, 1999, U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania.

¹⁵ John Hooper, The Spaniards: A Portrait of the New Spain (London: Penguin Books, 1987), 216.

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¹⁷ Ibid., 229.

¹⁸ Hooper, 231.

¹⁹ Cyrus Ernesto Zirakzadeh, A Rebellious People: Basques, Protests and Politics (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1991), 200.

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²¹ Robert P. Clark and Michael H. Haltzel, Editors, Spain in the 1980s: The Democratic Transition and a New International Role (Cambridge, MA: Ballinger Publishing, 1987), 142.

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²³ Hooper, 230.

²⁴ "Ethnologue: Areas: Europe: Spain." Available from <http://www.sil.org>; Internet; accessed 20 October 1998.

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⁵³ Maxwell, 62.

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⁵⁵ Maxwell, 23.

⁵⁶ Clark, 149-150.

⁵⁷ Maxwell, 79.

⁵⁸ Juan Rubio, "Andalucia no traga", Cambio 16, 12 July 1998, 30-32.

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⁶¹ "Participacion espanola en la Alianza Atlantica." <http://www.ole-net.com>: Internet; accessed 30 August 1998.

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